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**A
RIVERRUNNER'S
GUIDE TO**



**THE
SALT RIVER**

By Dana Hollister

INTRODUCTION

Prior to my first trip down the Salt River, I was told, "your boat's too big, the river's too high, the water's too cold, you won't make it." Ten percent is true, the other ninety is trying to keep the last big secret preserved.

Guides to the outdoors always have an impact. Most of the argument is against publicity of the wilderness. However, after launching and taking out at uncontrolled sites and climbing and trekking through a wilderness of garbage, I can easily sympathize with the other side of the fence.

Dr. John Ricker and Pete Weinel have long since been the source of information to the Salt River. Some of their first adventures down the Salt were in the late fifties and early sixties.

Here, I compiled all of the information available to me, trying to stay within the guidelines already established.

PERMITTING — The launching sites are on the Apache Indian Reservation. It is required that you have a permit to camp and launch. It's very simple, once at the site, if you are approached by the ranger, pay him. Don't ask how much it costs, read the permit carefully and then hand over the correct amount. About ten to fifteen dollars per person (1986), depending on if you camped or not. If the ranger is not there, then when you return to pick up your vehicle, you can pay him.

If you run the entire length of the river you will take out on Tonto National Forest Service land. Tonto at this time does not require a permit; however, this will change in the next few years. There is an address in the back of this guide, if you would like updated information about permitting before your trip.

Vehicles left at launch and take out sites have been known to be vandalized. In the last few years there haven't been any real problems. To be on the safe side, leave nothing of value in sight.

CAMPING — There are camping sites available at the Put-in. Refer to the guide. It's always a lot cooler in Salt River Canyon than downstream. There is firewood (driftwood) and picnic benches for your camping comfort.

SEASON — Normally the best time of year falls between late March and early May. However, I have seen the season last little more than thirty days. Then on the other hand we've run from February to June. Other times of year the water fluctuates. You can run it most any month if the weather cooperates. You'll need seven hundred cfs. to get rafts through. The highest cfs. is, most typically, in March. For a recording of flow information, updated daily Monday thru Friday, call 236-5929. The flows needed are: Salt at Salt River Canyon and Salt at Roosevelt. It's not uncommon for it to pick up a couple thousand on the way down. If the flow at the bottom is smaller, then the runoff hasn't reached that gauging station.

SAFETY — There are not any stringent rules or check outs to go through. At the present time, fire pans and portapotty are not required (1986). But, of course, common river etiquette should be practiced. Always have an extra oar and blade. Life jackets should be worn at least to mile 18. First aid goes without saying. If you're unfamiliar with the river, scout! And a word to the wise, only the most experienced boatman should consider running Quartzsite Falls. Reading this water is both important and difficult. If you make this run, you're half lucky and half good. (This is my opinion). If you don't, you're dead.

INDEX TO RAPIDS

Rapids are listed in the order they will be encountered. Rating will be done in three categories: Low water (LW), average water (AW), and high water (HW). Grading will be done one through five. They will not necessarily coincide with other rivers. The Salt is unique in its fluctuating water levels and unpredictable currents. Take every rapid seriously. Grades are given to help determine difficulty and not to predict the hazards. Annual flood stage could change any part of this river drastically. It is not dam regulated, so be prepared for moved rocks, rapids, and other obstacles. No details will be given, to speak of, unless there is an unusual hazard. If you don't have experience, go with someone who does. This river is not for the beginner or unprepared.

The river has been run at about 10,000 cfs. Anything over five to six thousand is considered very dangerous. Many things wash out and new things appear. I have read that the Forest Service considers the river extremely dangerous above 2,500 cfs. My opinion would be between six and eight thousand you might want to put a lid on it. The Forest Service also mentions boats no longer than 14'. We have 16' rafts and run them from 700 cfs. and up, no problem.

LW = Low Water 700 cfs. - 1,000 cfs.
 AW = Average Water 1,000 cfs. - 2,500 cfs.
 HW = High Water 2,500 cfs. - 6,000 cfs.

I = More than a Ripple
 II = Gonna Get Splashed
 III = Bail Bail Bail
 IV = If you stay in the Boat: Bail Bail Bail
 V = Get out of the Boat's Way When it's Flipping

| <u>Rapid Name</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>PG #</u> | <u>Remarks PG #</u> |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------------|
| Island | II | II | III | 6 | 5 |
| Bump and Grind | II | II | II | 6 | 5 |
| Maytag | II | II | II | 6 | 5 |
| Reforma | II | III | III | 6 | 5 |
| Mother Rock | II | II | II | 6 | 5 |
| Overboard | II | III | III | 6 | 5 |
| Rock Chute | I | I | I | 6 | 5 |
| Put N' Take | I | I | I | 6 | 5 |
| Exhibition | II | III | III | 8 | 7 |
| Cibicue | I | I | I | 8 | 7 |
| Blade Bender | II | II | II | 8 | 7 |
| Three Way | II | II | II | 8 | 7 |
| Salt Draw | II | II | II | 8 | 7 |
| T-Shirt | III | III | III | 8 | 7 |
| Salt Banks | II | II | II | 8 | 7 |
| Ledges | II | III+ | III+ | 10 | 9 |
| Ben's Hole | I | I | I | 10 | 9 |
| Walnut | I | I | I | 10 | 9 |
| Ruin | I | I | I | 10 | 9 |
| Rat Trap | II | IV | II | 10 | 9 |
| White Rock | III | III | III | 10 | 9 |
| Upper Hades | III | III | III | 10 | 9 |
| Granite | III | IV | III | 10 | 9 |
| Dropalot | I | I | I | 12 | 11 |
| New Wave | II | II | II | 14 | 13 |
| Eye of the Needle | IV | IV | IV | 14 | 13 |
| Black Rock (Nose Dive) | IV | IV | IV | 14 | 13 |

| <u>Rapid Name</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>PG #</u> | <u>Remarks PG #</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------------|
| Screwdriver | II | III | II | 16 | 15 |
| Devil's Pindahoe | II | III | III | 16 | 15 |
| Upper Corral | II | III | II | 16 | 15 |
| Yankee | I | I | I | 16 | 15 |
| Joe | I | I | I | 16 | 15 |
| Lower Corral | III | III | III | 18 | 17 |
| Pinball | III | III | III | 18 | 17 |
| The Maze | IV | IV | IV | 18 | 17 |
| Black Jack | I | I | I | 18 | 17 |
| Quartzite Falls | VI | VI | VI | 20 | 19 |
| Corkscrew Chute | IV | IV | IV | 20 | 19 |
| Cliffhanger | II | II | II | 20 | 19 |
| Coon | I | I | I | 22 | 21 |
| Chalk | I | I | I | 22 | 21 |
| Rock Pile | I | I | I | 24 | 23 |
| Diversion Dam | VI | VI | VI | 26 | 25 |

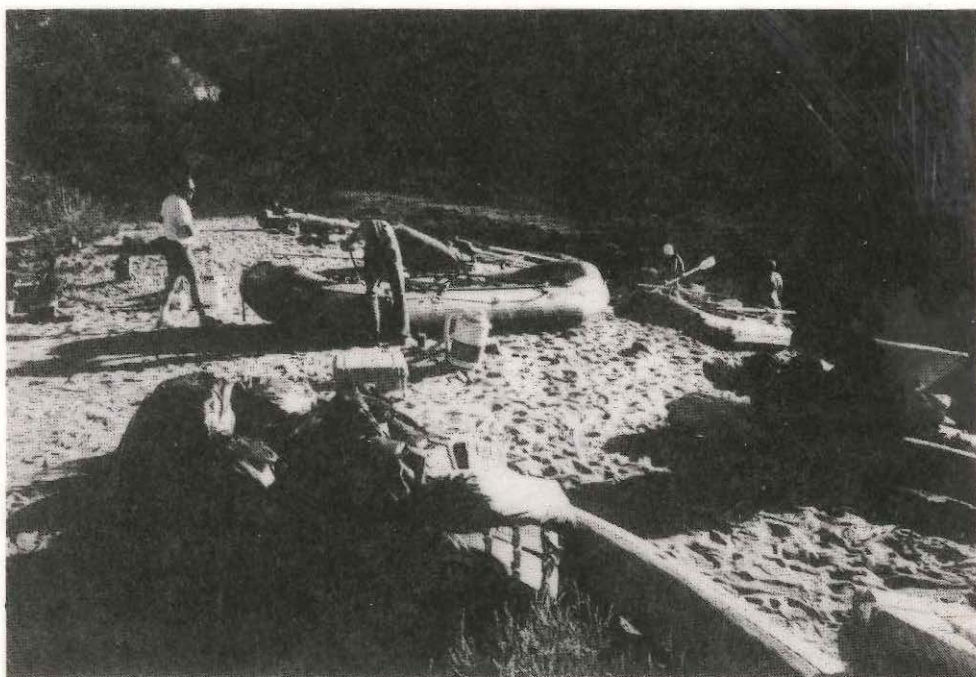
Ratings were concluded from four boatman's opinions.

THE RIVER —

| <u>Launches to Take Out</u> | <u>Miles</u> | <u>Days</u> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Hwy. Bridge to Cibicue Canyon | 6.5 | 3 hrs. |
| Hwy. Bridge to Gleason Flat | 19 | 2 |
| Hwy. Bridge to Horseshoe Bend | 41 | 3 |
| Hwy. Bridge to Roosevelt Lake | 54.5 | 3 to 4 |
| Cibicue Creek to Gleason Flat | 12 | 1 |
| Cibicue Creek to Horseshoe Bend | 34 | 3 |
| Cibicue Creek to Roosevelt Lake | 48 | 3 to 4 |
| Gleason Flat to Horseshoe Bend | 22 | 2 |
| Gleason Flat to Roosevelt Lake | 36 | 3 |
| Horseshoe Bend to Roosevelt Lake | 14 | 2 |

NOTE: As of 1986 the road to Horseshoe Bend has been closed. You must run all the way to Roosevelt. It is possible to put-in and take-out at Gleason Flat; however, road conditions vary a lot.

| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| ISLAND | II | II | III | Normally one puts in just below Island Rapid; however, the old guide warns of rocks at LW, easier at HW, a drowning in '73. |
| BUMP AND GRIND | II | II | II | ----- |
| MAYTAG CHUTE | II | II | II | River splits, stay right for main channel. |
| REFORMA | II | III | III | At AW to HW very sneaky holes will keep and flip, can be avoided by running right. |
| MOTHER ROCK | II | II | II | Stay right. |
| OVERBOARD | II | III | III | At HW a great ride. Huge waves. May be the biggest on the river. |
| ROCK CHUTE | I | I | I | ----- |
| PUT N TAKE | I | I | I | ----- |

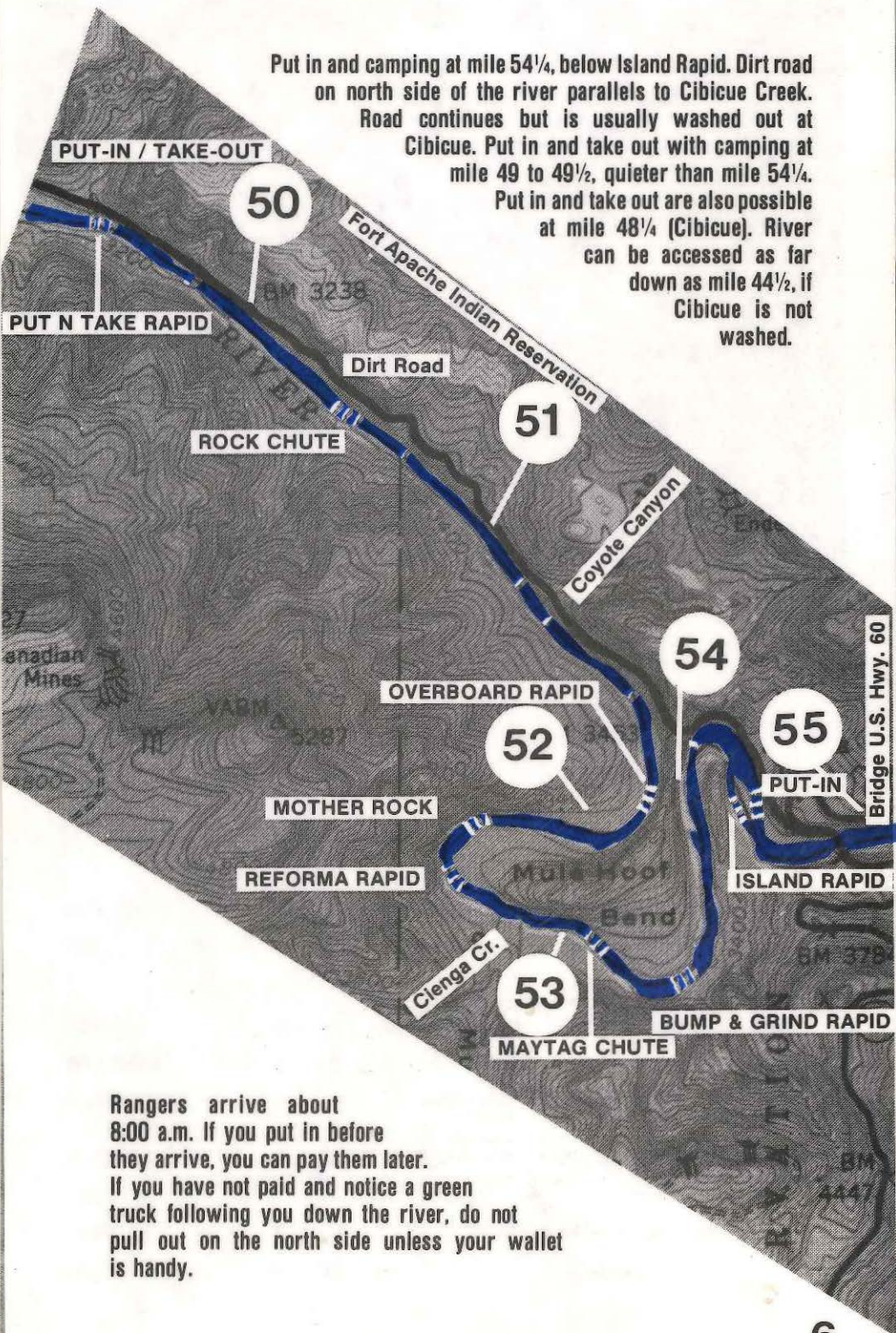


**Rigging at Island
Beach, Mile 54½**

Put in and camping at mile 54¼, below Island Rapid. Dirt road on north side of the river parallels to Cibicue Creek.

Road continues but is usually washed out at Cibicue. Put in and take out with camping at mile 49 to 49½, quieter than mile 54¼.

Put in and take out are also possible at mile 48¼ (Cibicue). River can be accessed as far down as mile 44½, if Cibicue is not washed.



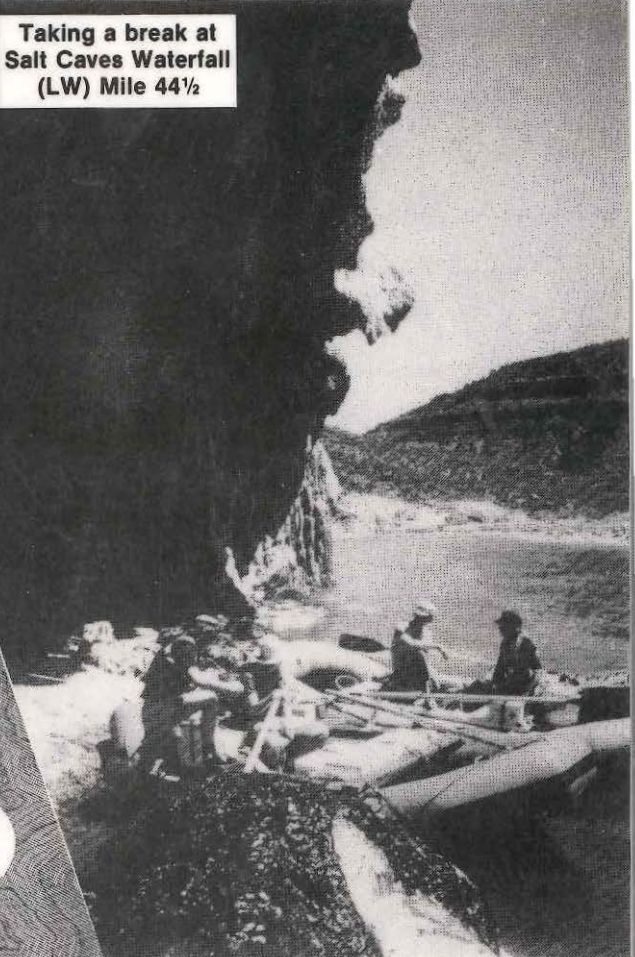
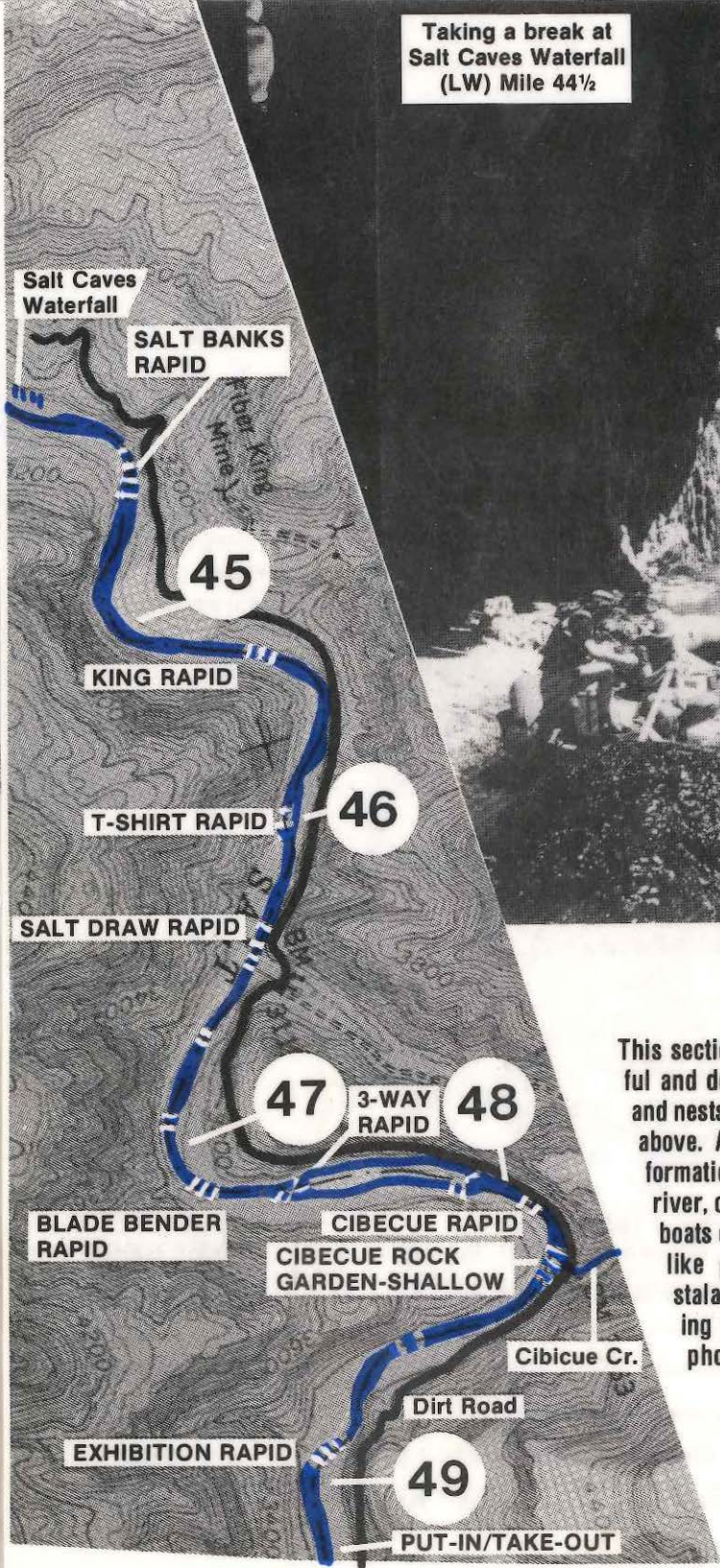
Rangers arrive about 8:00 a.m. If you put in before they arrive, you can pay them later. If you have not paid and notice a green truck following you down the river, do not pull out on the north side unless your wallet is handy.

| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| EXHIBITION | II | III | III | FUN. Can be big waves at AW to HW. |
| CIBICUE | I | I | I | ----- |
| THREE WAY | II | II | II | Second channel on right LW. Second or third AW to HW. |
| BLADE BENDER | II | II | II | Sneaky rocks LW to AW. |
| SALT DRAW | II | II | II | ----- |
| T-SHIRT | III | III | III | Drops off left, then sharp right with one big hole. This rapid has been printed on many a T-Shirt. |
| KING | I | I | I | ----- |
| SALT BANKS | II | II | II | A noisy, mild rapid. |

Dana, running a 16' Achilles, dives into T-Shirt Rapid. (LW) Mile 46



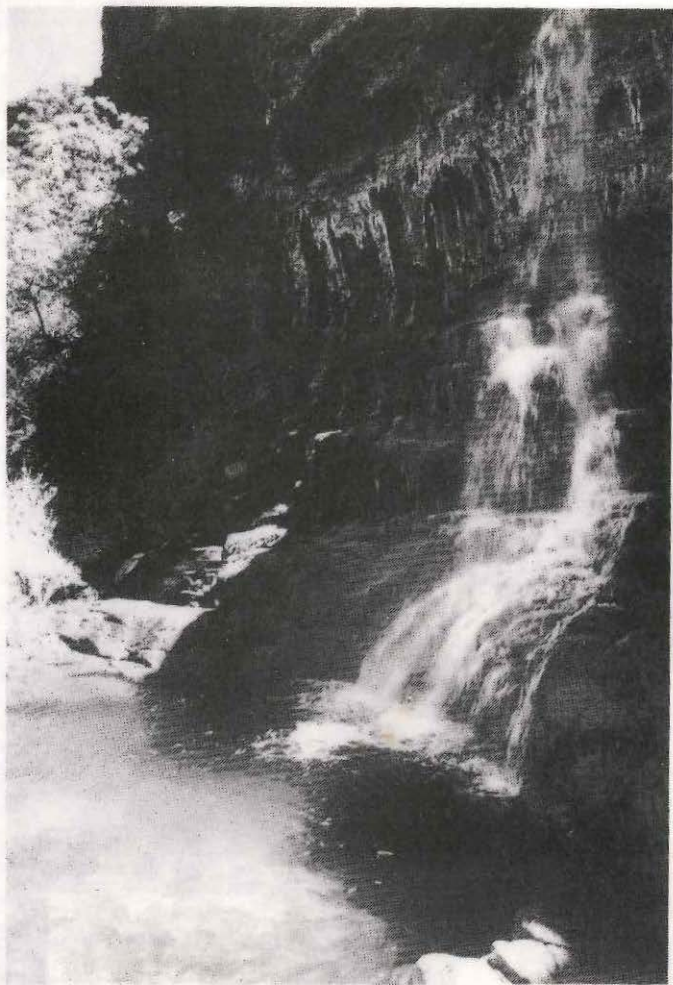
Taking a break at
Salt Caves Waterfall
(LW) Mile 44½

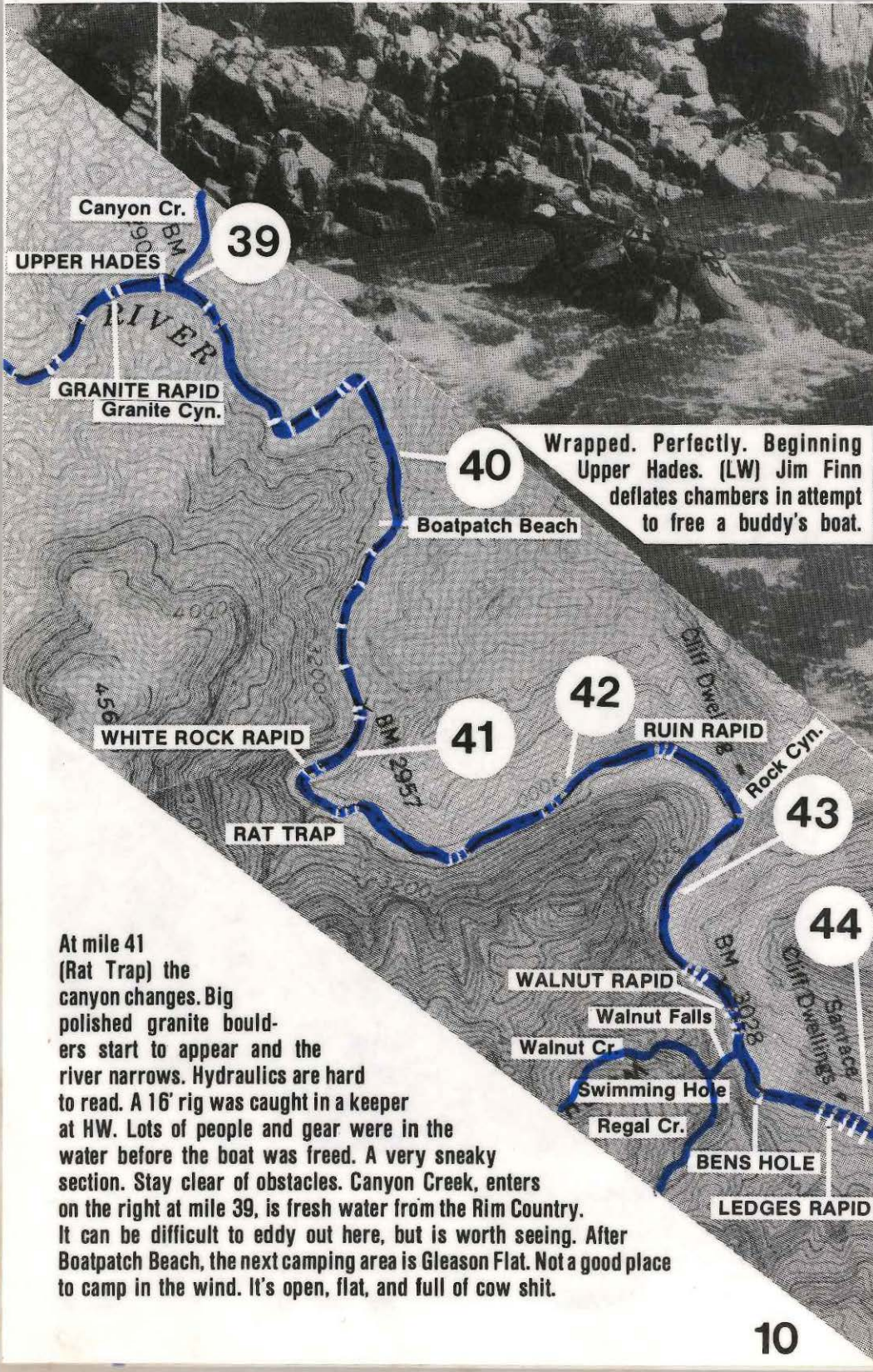


This section of the river is beautiful and deep. Occasionally eagles and nests can be seen on the cliffs above. At mile 44½ an unusual formation on the right side of the river, called the Salt Banks, and boats can be pulled into a cave-like grotto. Stalagmites and stalactites with water pouring off make this a unique photography opportunity.

| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| LEDGES | II | III+ | III+ | Straight forward, watch for rocks! |
| BEN'S HOLE | I | I | I | Stay right, little keeper next to shore on the left. |
| WALNUT | I | I | I | _____ |
| RUIN | I | I | I | _____ |
| RAT TRAP | II | IV | II | AW, what a ride. Scout. Tricky current. |
| WHITE ROCK | III | III | III | Just around the corner from Rat Trap. A wild ride thru some granite awaits you. HW, think fast. |
| UPPER HADES | III | III | III | Very tricky currents. Boats wrap and find keepers where you least expect it. Hard to eddy out. Do not swim. |
| GRANITE RAPID | III | IV | III | Big rock in channel. Either side is tough. |

Walnut Falls — On the left side of the river, one will see water cascading from the side of a cliff. Below is a great little, cold swimming hole. I have never been on the river when this wasn't running. For a small group, it's a nice camp.





Canyon Cr.

UPPER HADES

39

RIVER

GRANITE RAPID
Granite Cyn.

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Boatpatch Beach

Wrapped. Perfectly. Beginning Upper Hades. (LW) Jim Finn deflates chambers in attempt to free a buddy's boat.

WHITE ROCK RAPID

41

RAT TRAP

42

RUIN RAPID

43

44

WALNUT RAPID

Walnut Falls

Walnut Cr.

Swimming Hole

Regal Cr.

BENS HOLE

LEDGES RAPID

At mile 41 (Rat Trap) the canyon changes. Big polished granite boulders start to appear and the river narrows. Hydraulics are hard to read. A 16' rig was caught in a keeper at HW. Lots of people and gear were in the water before the boat was freed. A very sneaky section. Stay clear of obstacles. Canyon Creek, enters on the right at mile 39, is fresh water from the Rim Country. It can be difficult to eddy out here, but is worth seeing. After Boatpatch Beach, the next camping area is Gleason Flat. Not a good place to camp in the wind. It's open, flat, and full of cow shit.

RAPID

LW

AW

HW

REMARKS

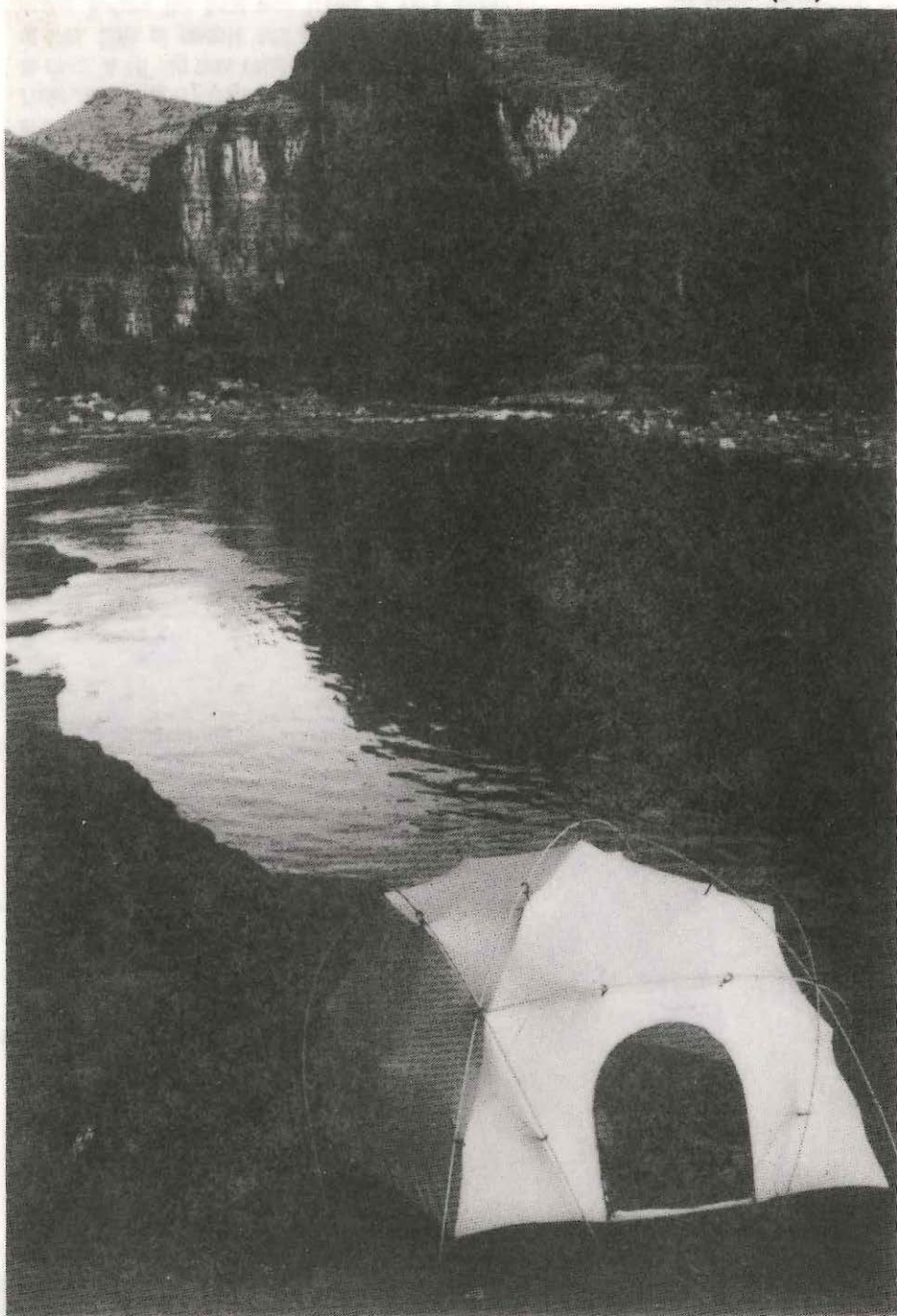
DROPALOT

|

|

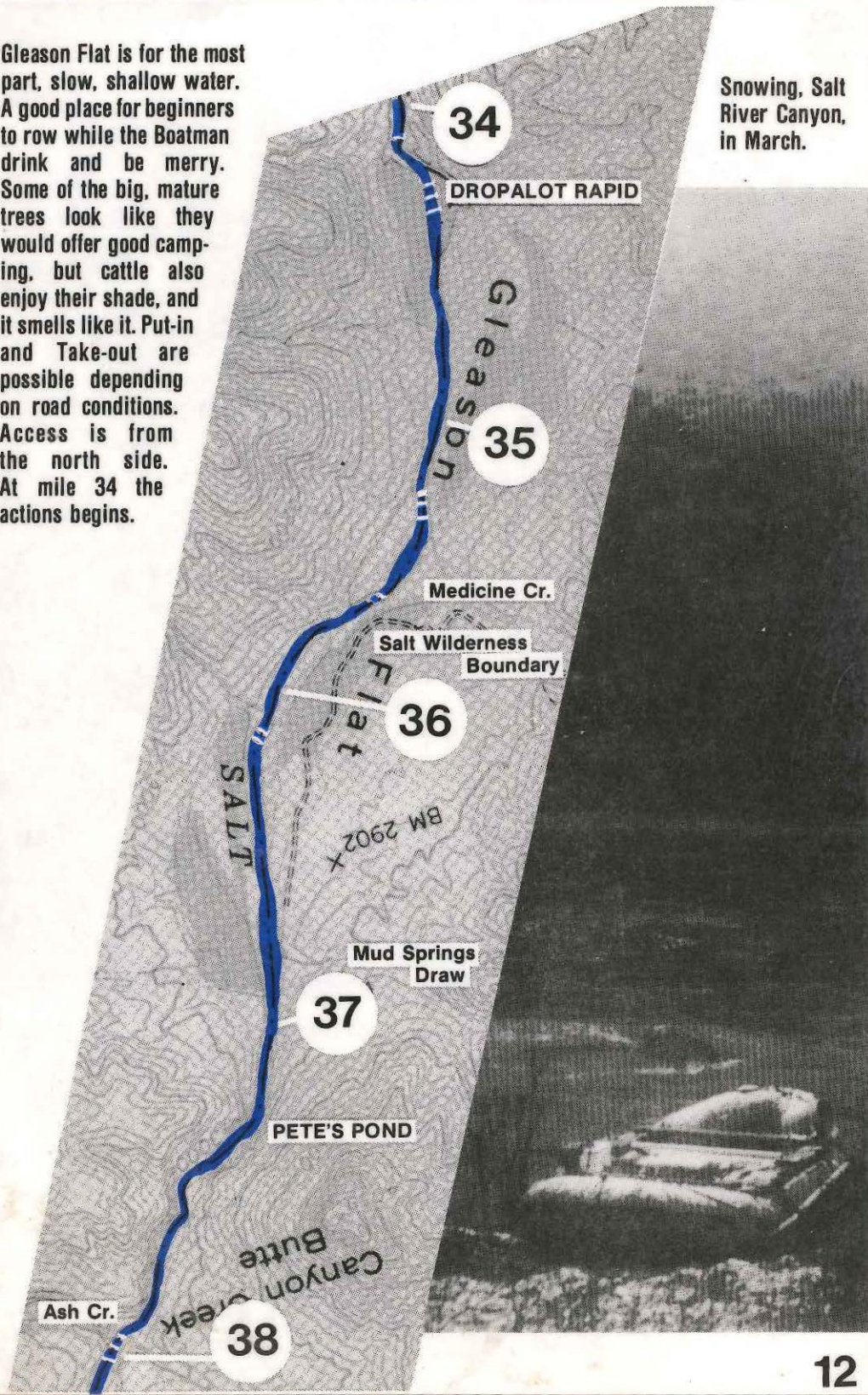
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Camp at Walnut Falls
in June. (LW)



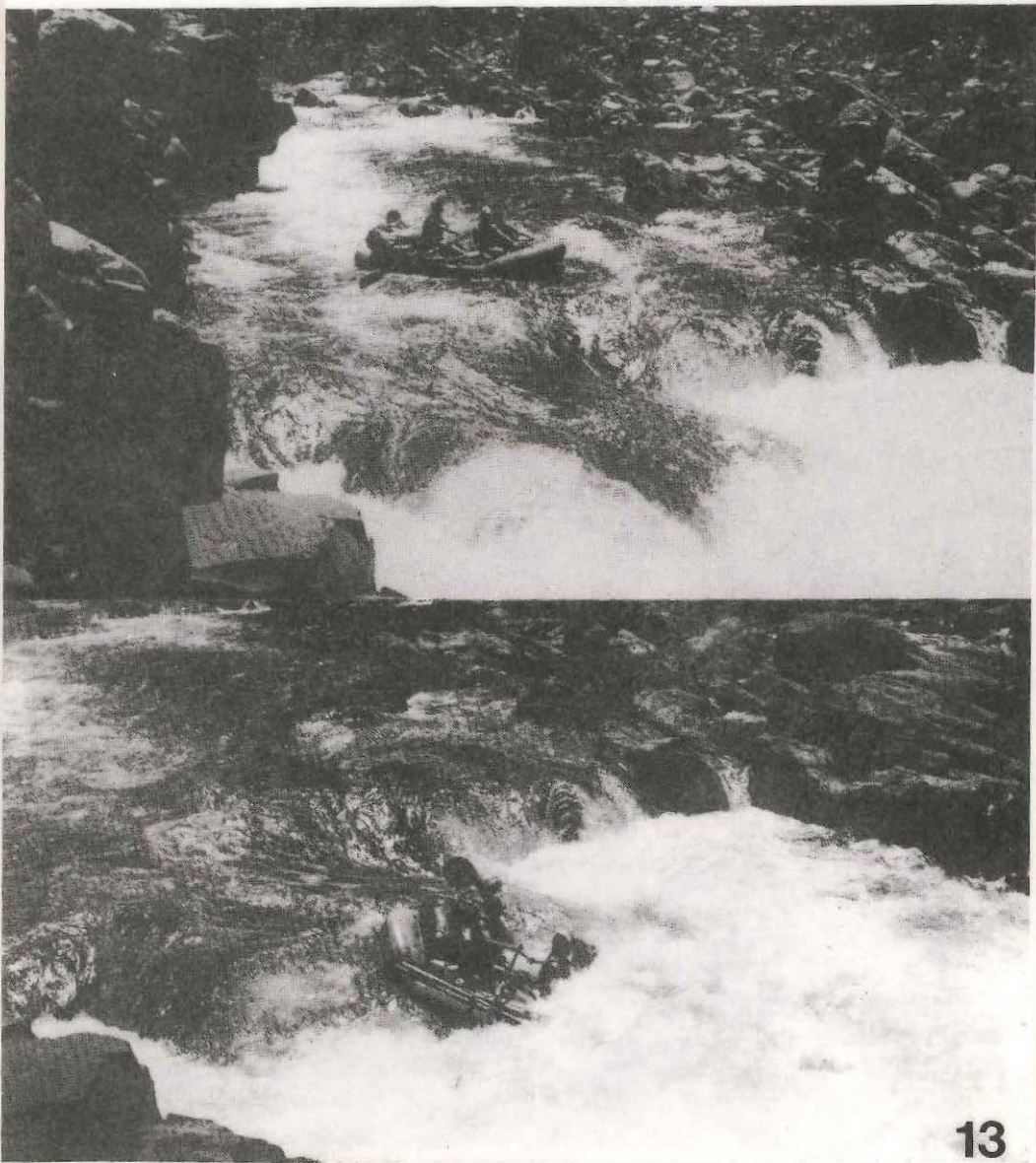
Gleason Flat is for the most part, slow, shallow water. A good place for beginners to row while the Boatman drink and be merry. Some of the big, mature trees look like they would offer good camping, but cattle also enjoy their shade, and it smells like it. Put-in and Take-out are possible depending on road conditions. Access is from the north side. At mile 34 the actions begins.

Snowing, Salt River Canyon, in March.



| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| NEW WAVE | II | II | II | Left turn above The EYE. |
| EYE OF THE NEEDLE | IV | IV | IV | STAY LEFT!!! At HW looks like right side could go, but is mostly just a pour off with nasty hydraulics. Keep her straight and tuck your oars. Boats barely fit at LW. Difficult to scout. |
| BLACK ROCK | IV | IV | IV | Looks worse than it is. A good one to scout, from right. Great opportunity to make passengers nervous. Run with respect. |

Setting up for Black Rock. (LW)



30

V A T L I O N

DARY
DARY

Hackberry Spr. Wash

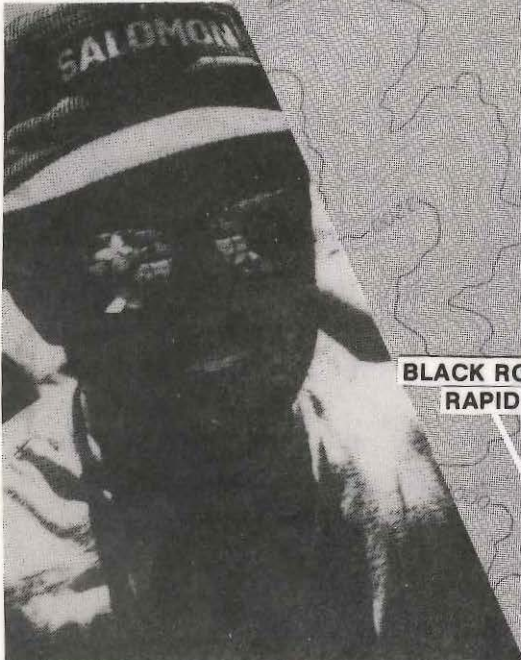
31

S A L T

Mike Gardner. We taught him how to make caffeinated coffee for hung over Boatman.

32

Mike tucks oars thru Eye of The Needle.



R I V E R

BLACK ROCK RAPID

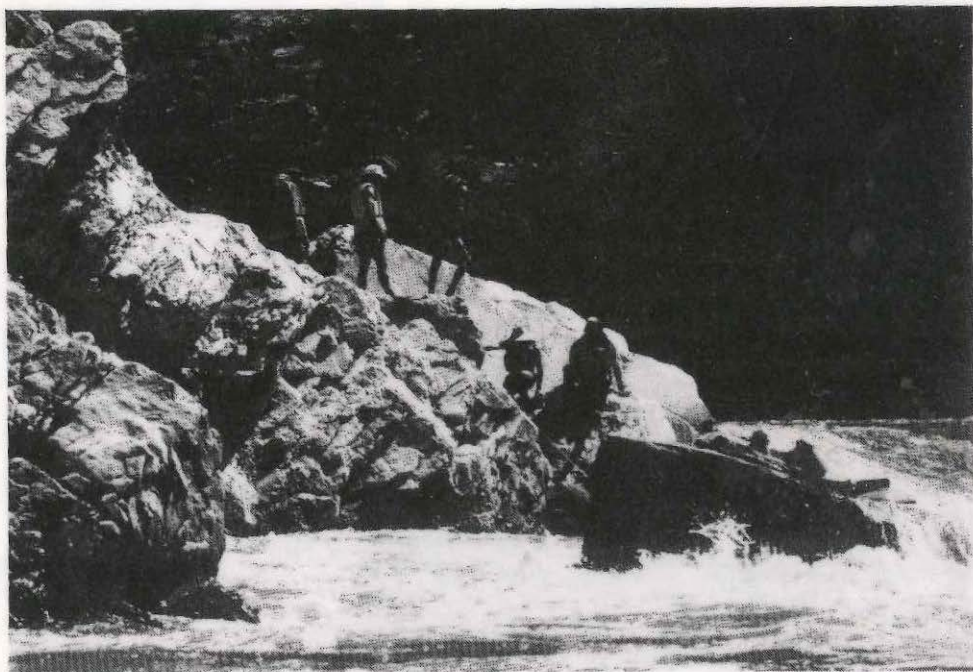
33

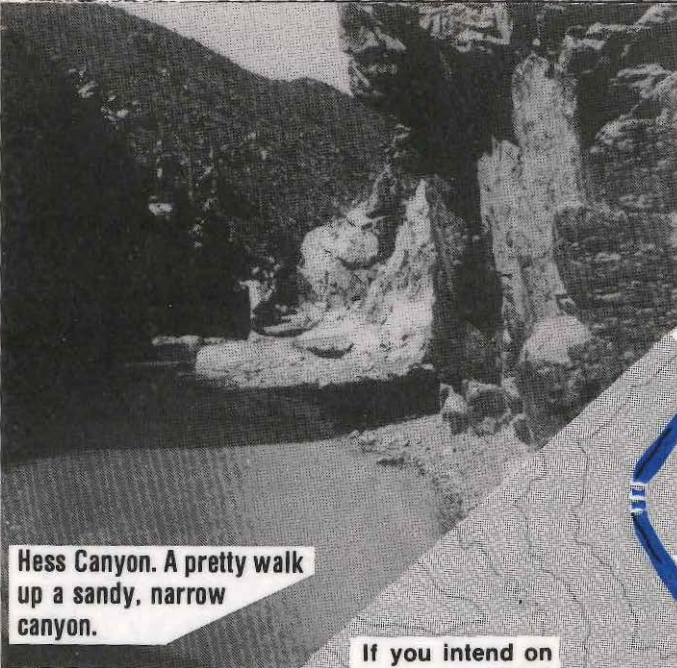
NEW WAVE

EYE OF THE NEEDLE

| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| SCREWDRIVER | II | III | II | Fun |
| DEVIL'S PINDAHOE | II | III | III | Wild current into rock wall. Stay right. Don't blow it. |
| UPPER CORRAL | II | III | II | Rocky. |
| YANKEE | I | I | I | ----- |
| JOE | I | I | I | ----- |

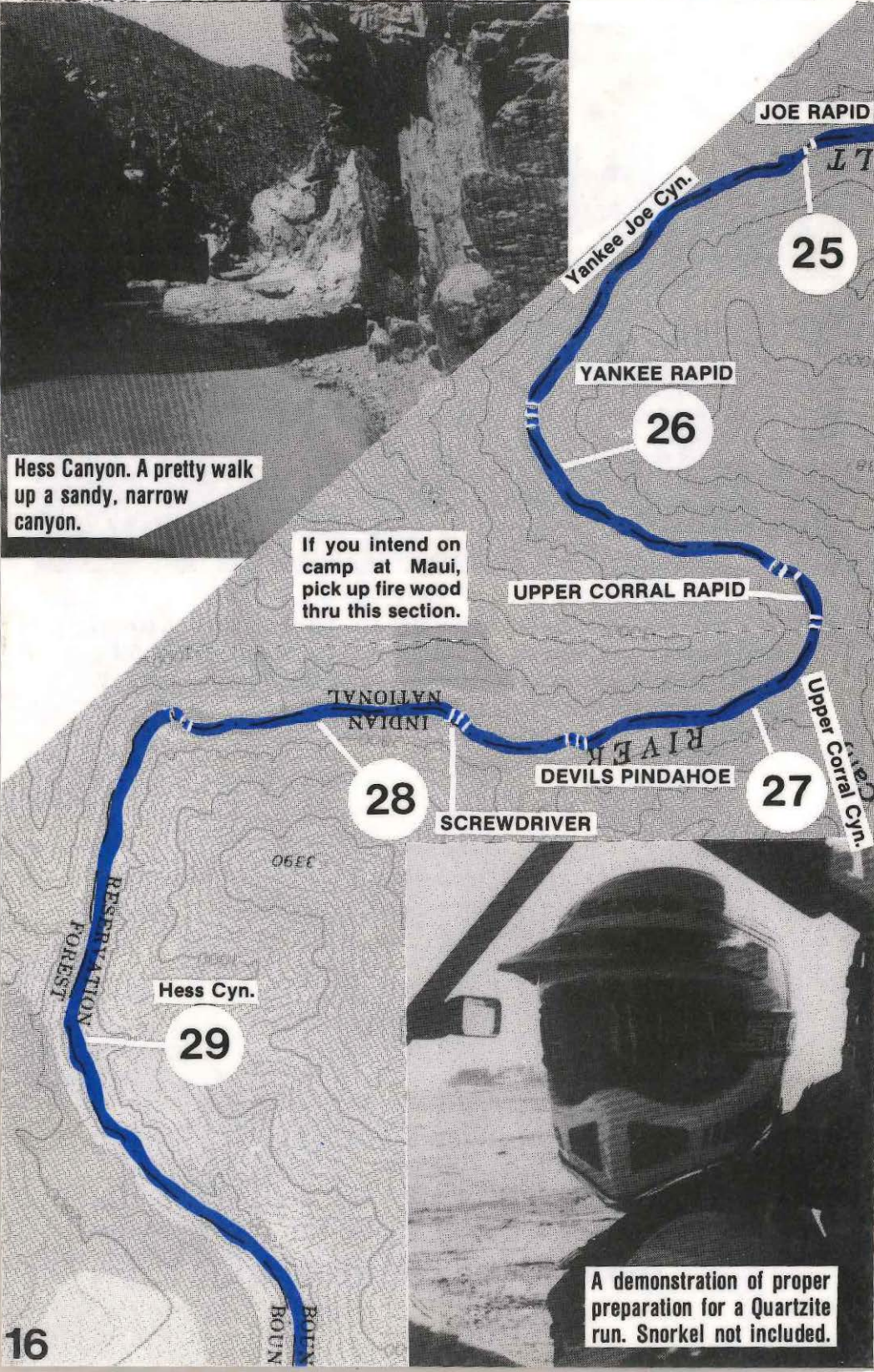
From downstream looking up at Quartzite Falls. Lining boats on river right. (Opposite side from Portage). A lot faster to line than to portage. At LW boats barely fit thru these rocks. See back pages of this guide for more on lining, portage and running Quartzite Falls.





Hess Canyon. A pretty walk up a sandy, narrow canyon.

If you intend on camp at Maui, pick up fire wood thru this section.



JOE RAPID

Yankee Joe Cyn.

25

YANKEE RAPID

26

UPPER CORRAL RAPID

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Upper Corral Cyn.

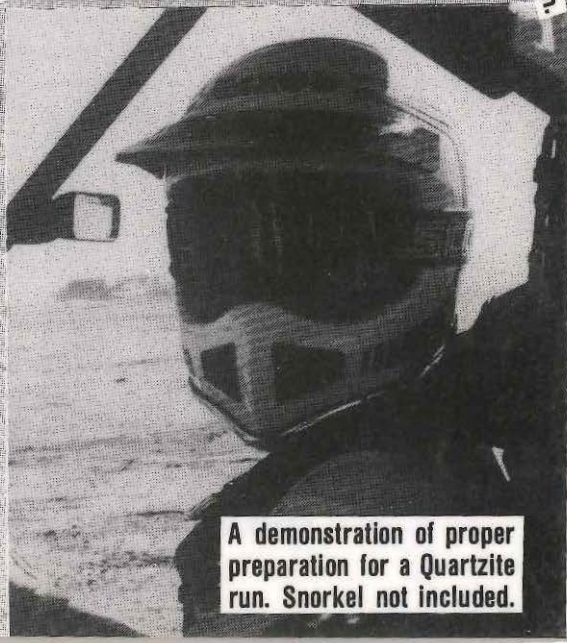
DEVILS PINDAHOE

28

SCREWDRIVER

Hess Cyn.

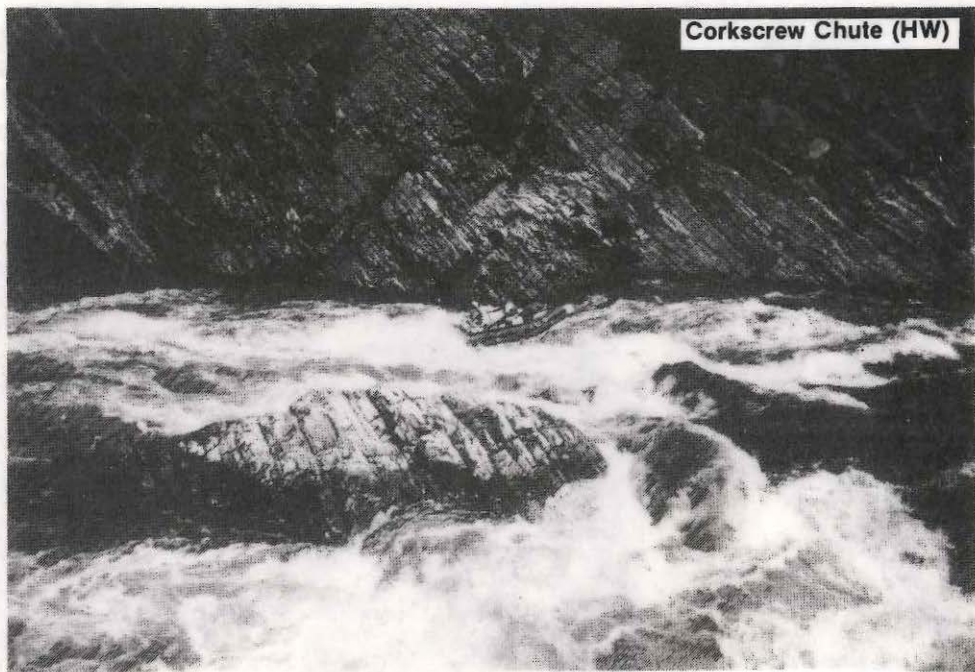
29



A demonstration of proper preparation for a Quartzite run. Snorkel not included.

| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| LOWER CORRAL | III | III | III | Left turn. Stay way left. |
| PINBALL | III | III | III | From Lower Corral down thru the Maze is unpredictable. Almost impossible to scout. |
| THE MAZE | IV | IV | IV | On a right turn the river is choked with several boulders. Anyway thru is the right way. Always scary. |
| BLACKJACK | I | I | I | _____ |

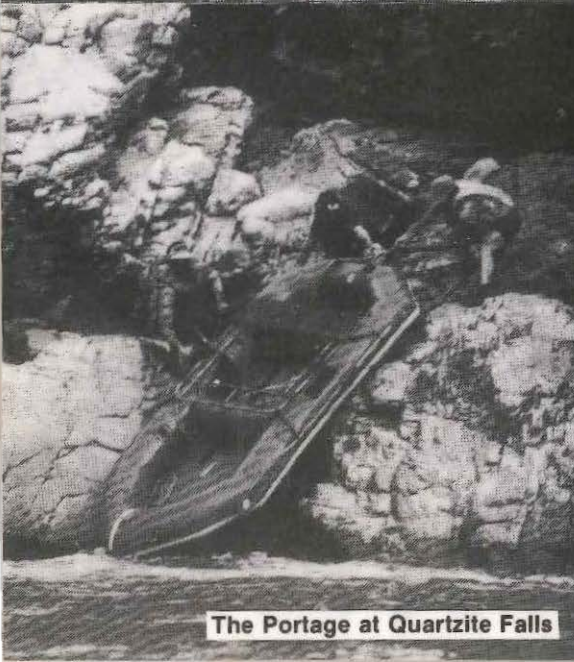
From mile 22½ to 24 is one of the most serious sections this river has to offer. At HW there are many little keepers. At LW many obstacles. At AW lots of problems. If you want experience this is where to get it. You either will or won't. I know of several Deliverance stories.



Corkscrew Chute (HW)



MAUI BEACH (LW)

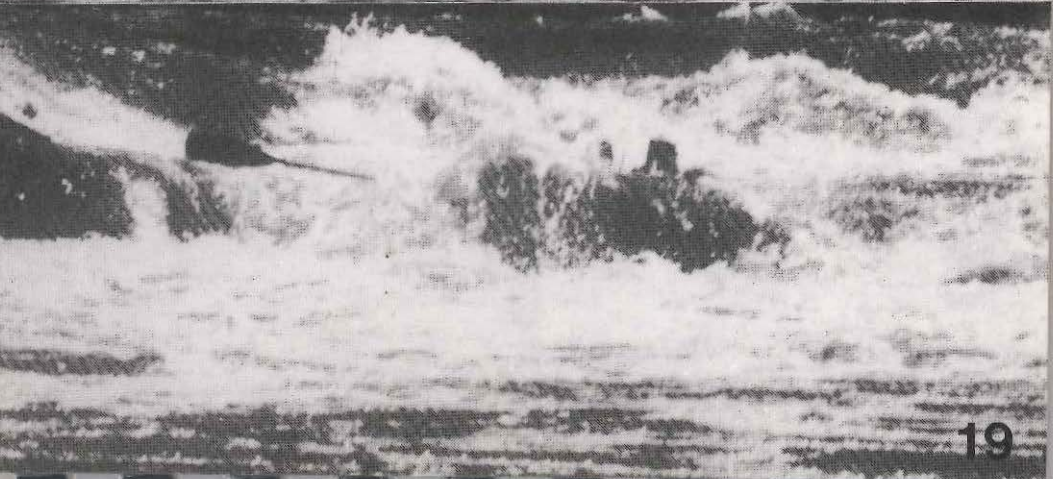
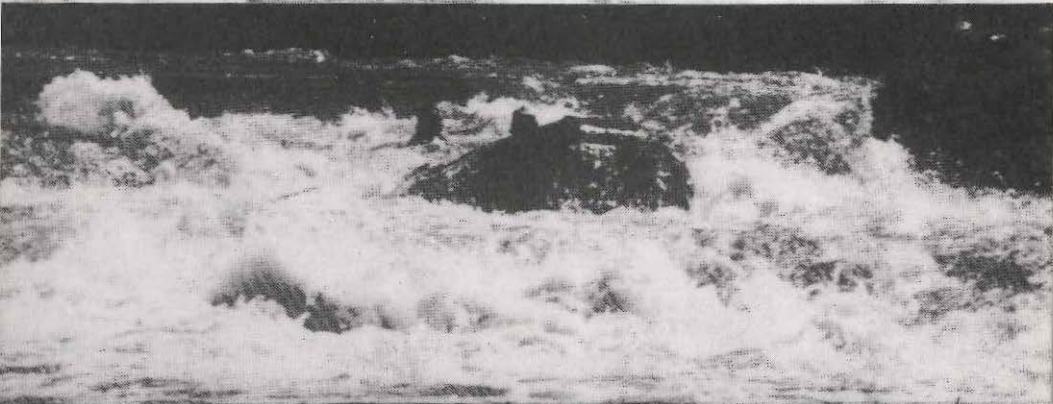


The Portage at Quartzite Falls

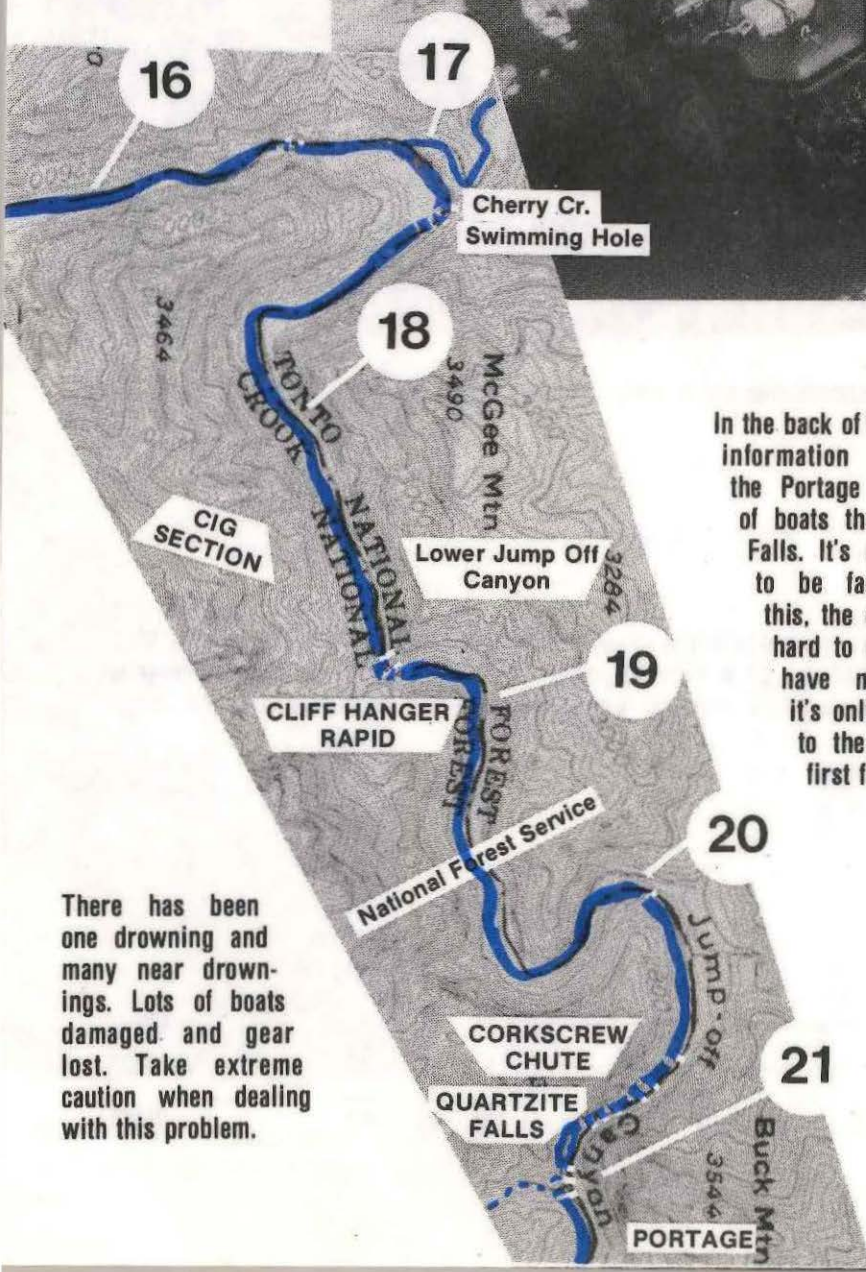
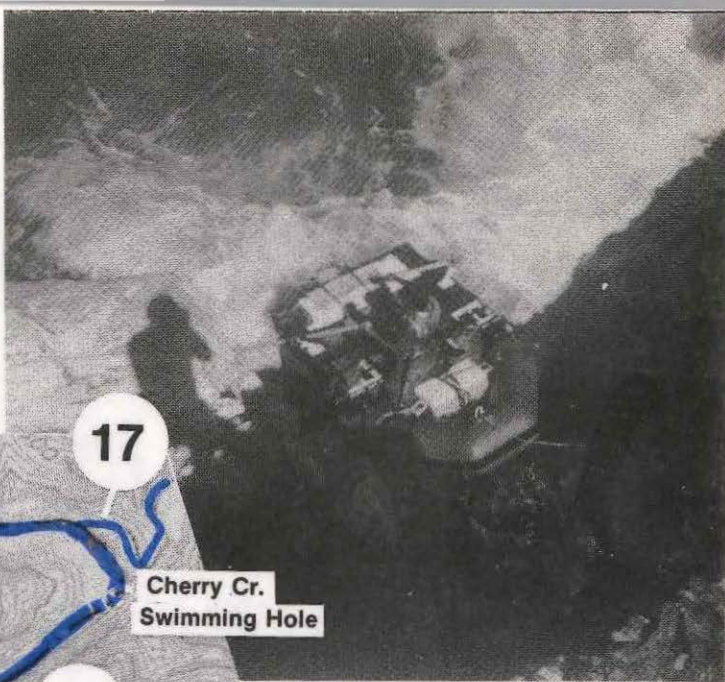


| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| QUARTZITE FALLS | VI | VI | VI | To be on the safe side, running this fall is not an option to be considered. |
| CORKSCREW CHUTE | IV | IV | IV | A good run and it lasts awhile. Scout from left. |
| CLIFF HANGER | I | II | I | Stay right. |

Jim Finn (Boatman) and Tom Morrey run Quartzite Falls, AW to HW, right side. This is not the side usually preferred.



Jim Finn (right) punches into the lower fall in a 15' Rouge. LW. The boat pauses for only a moment before moving out. This is the left side run. Note the recirculating water right of the boat.



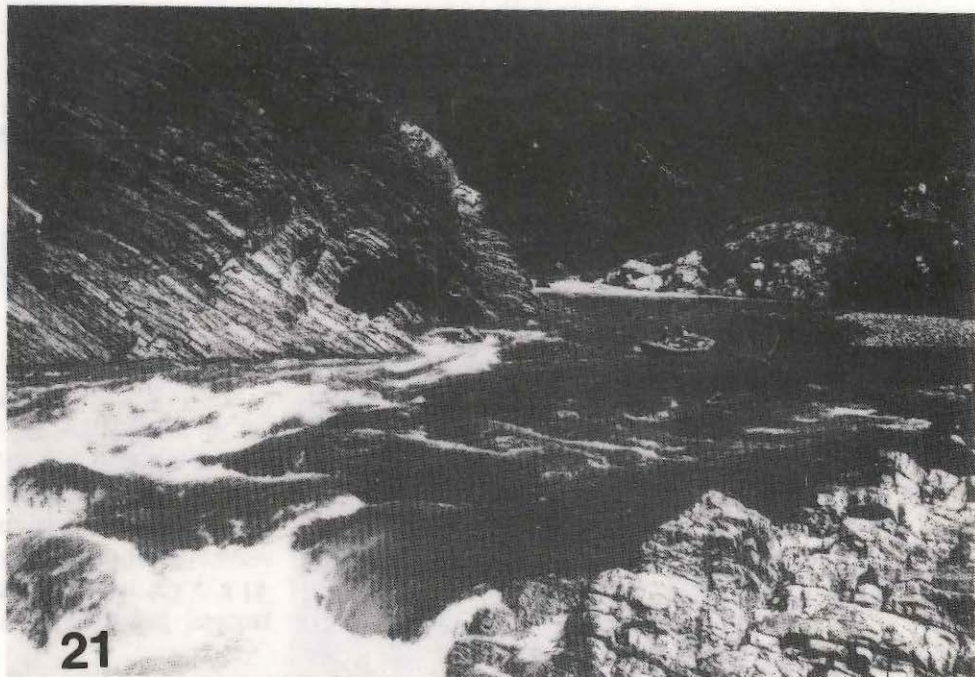
In the back of this guide is information concerning the Portage and Lining of boats thru Quartzite Falls. It's a good idea to be familiar with this, the eddy can be hard to catch. Boats have missed, and it's only a few feet to the top of the first fall.

There has been one drowning and many near drownings. Lots of boats damaged and gear lost. Take extreme caution when dealing with this problem.

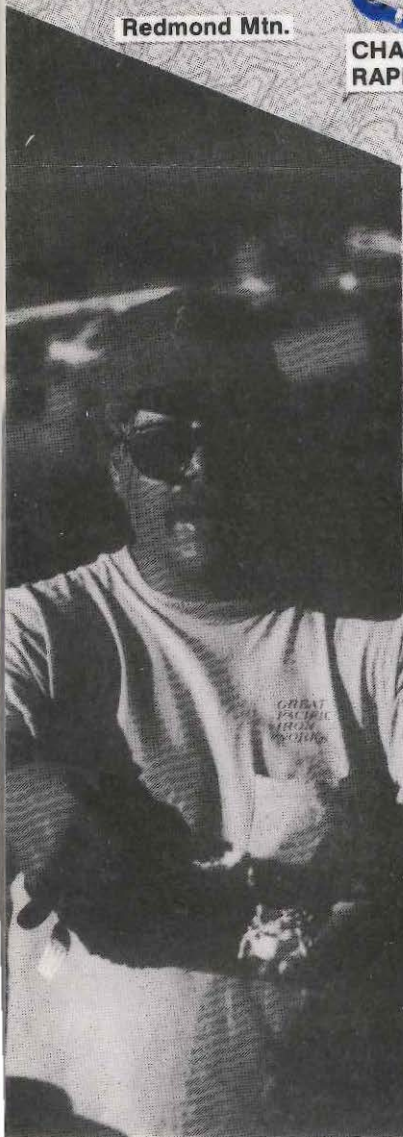
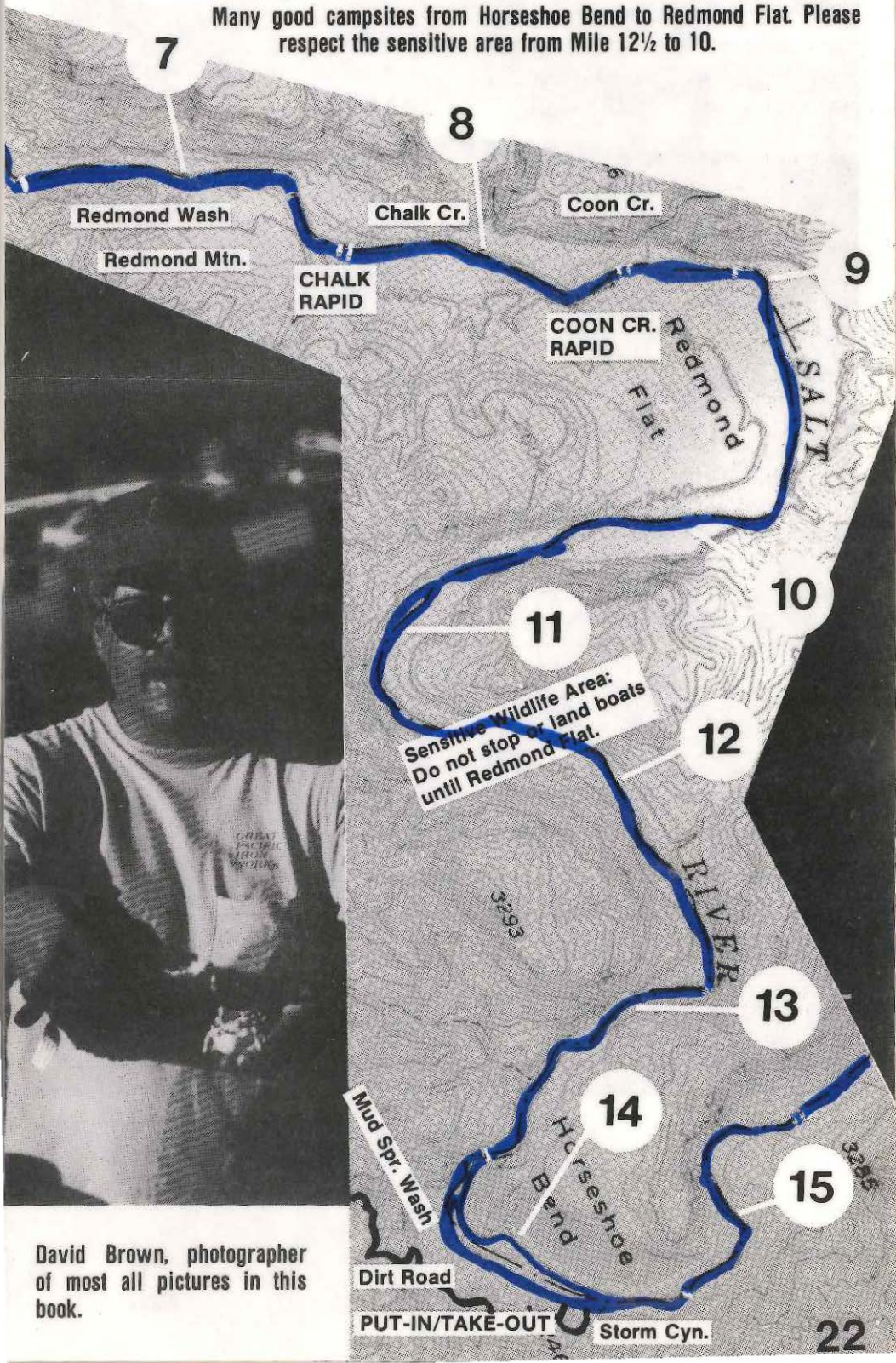
| <u>RAPID</u> | <u>LW</u> | <u>AW</u> | <u>HW</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| COON CR. | | | | ----- |
| CHALK | | | | ----- |

Check on road conditions and closures before planning put-in or take-out at Horseshoe Bend. As of 1986 this road closed because of an unhappy rancher. This is unfortunate, it can add nearly a day. Write to the address in the back of this guide for updates.

Setting up for Corkscrew Chute. Quartzite Falls in the background. HW.



Many good campsites from Horseshoe Bend to Redmond Flat. Please respect the sensitive area from Mile 12½ to 10.



David Brown, photographer of most all pictures in this book.

RAPID

LW

AW

HW

REMARKS

ROCKPILE

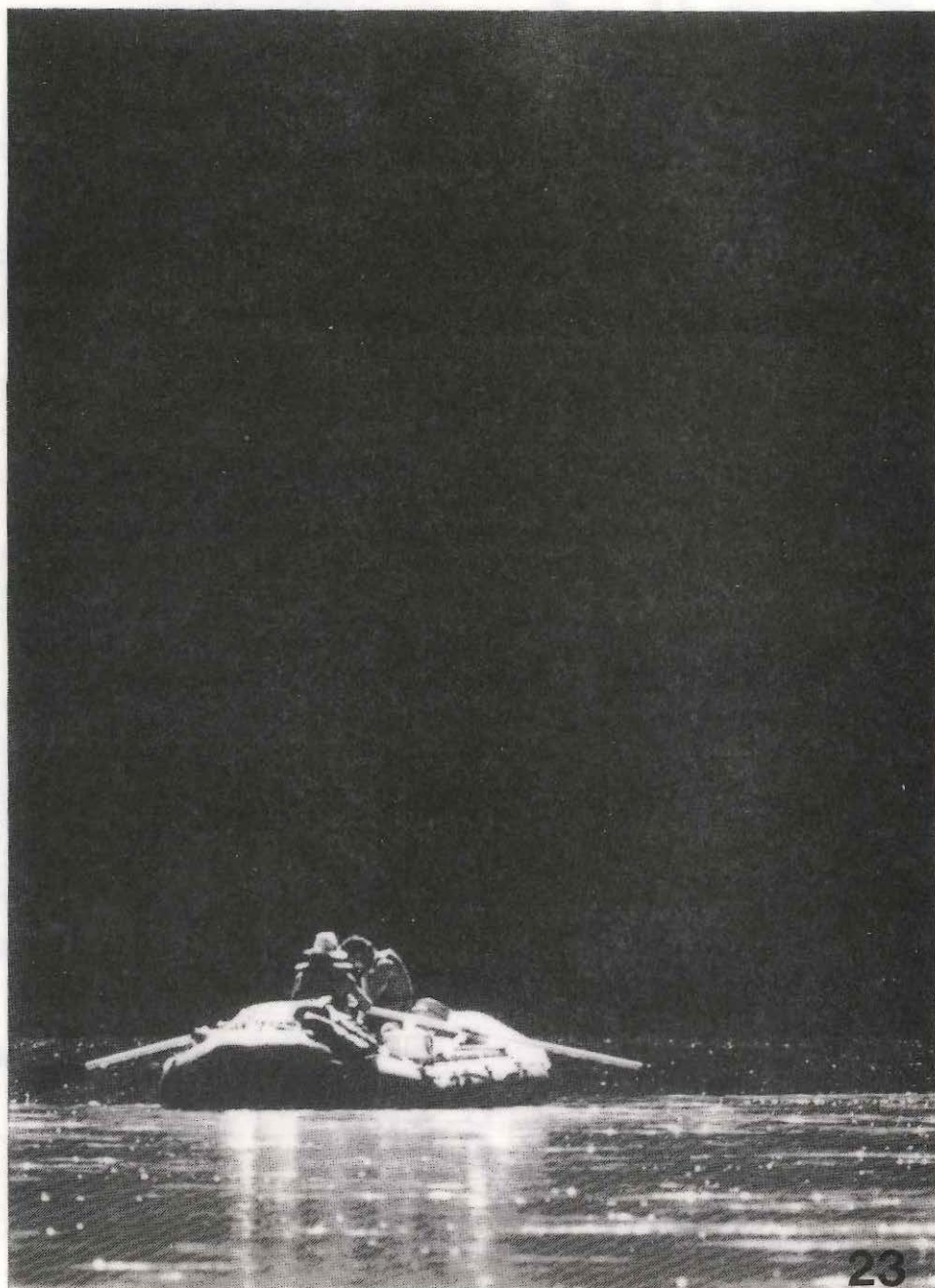
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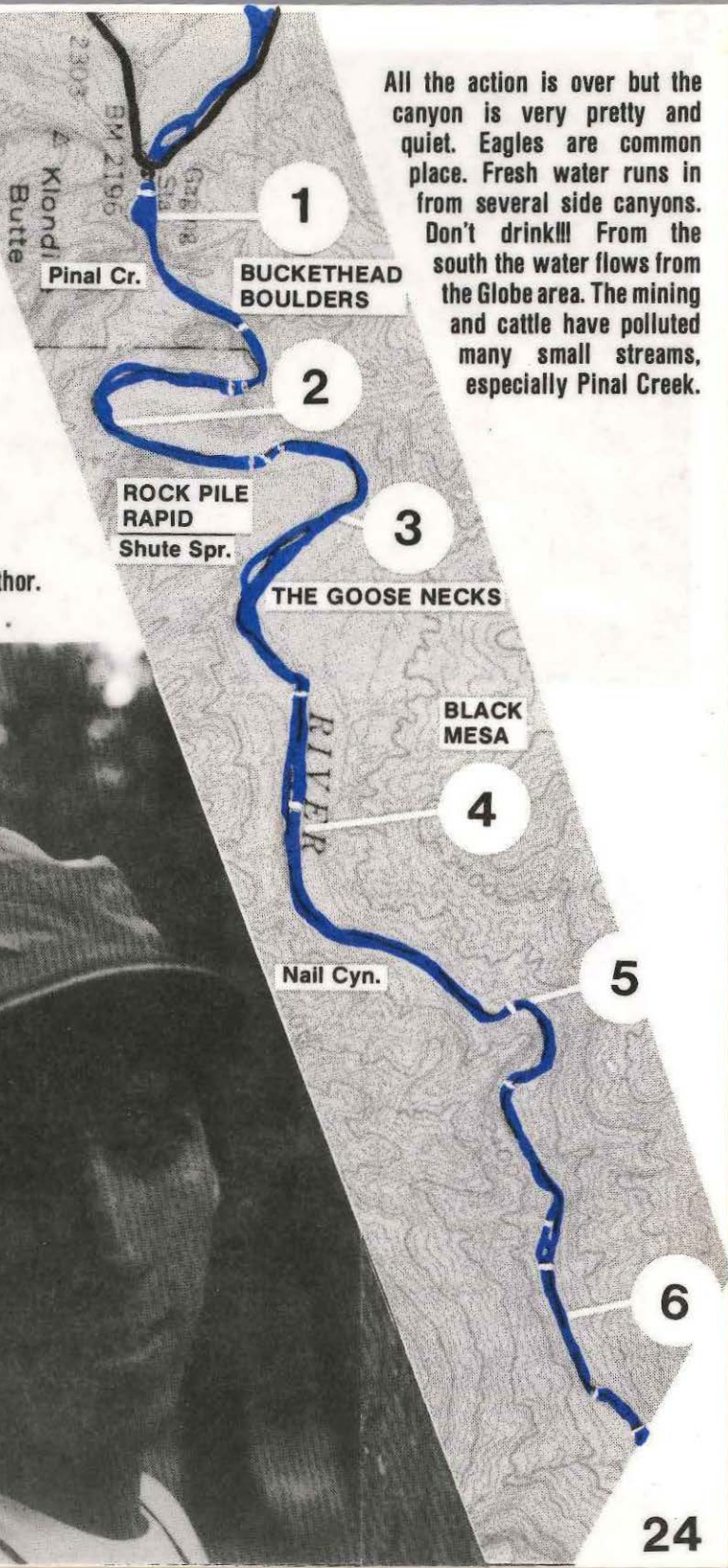
Shallow, rocks.

Dana Hollister and Jim Finn enjoying
a quiet moment in Canyon of Ladore.



All the action is over but the canyon is very pretty and quiet. Eagles are common place. Fresh water runs in from several side canyons. Don't drink!!! From the south the water flows from the Globe area. The mining and cattle have polluted many small streams, especially Pinal Creek.

Dana Hollister, author.

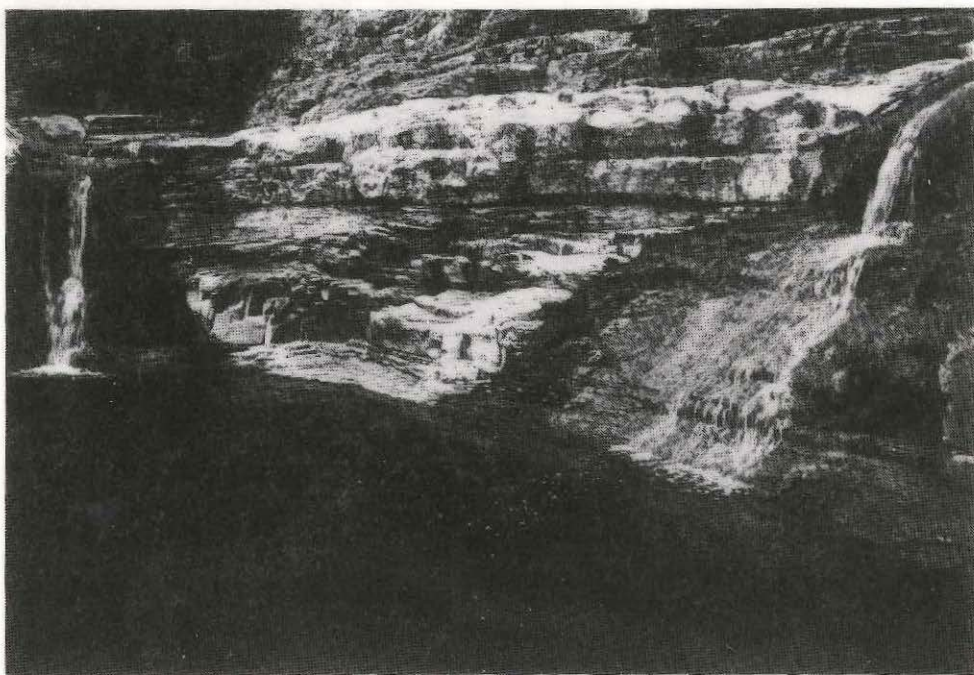


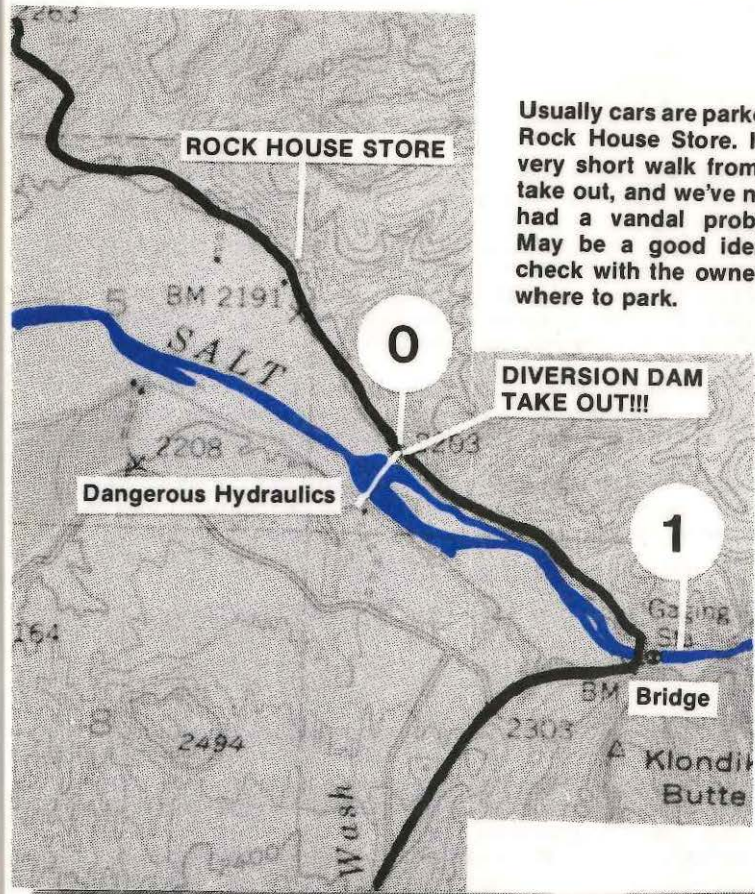
DIVERSION DAM!!!

DO NOT RUN!

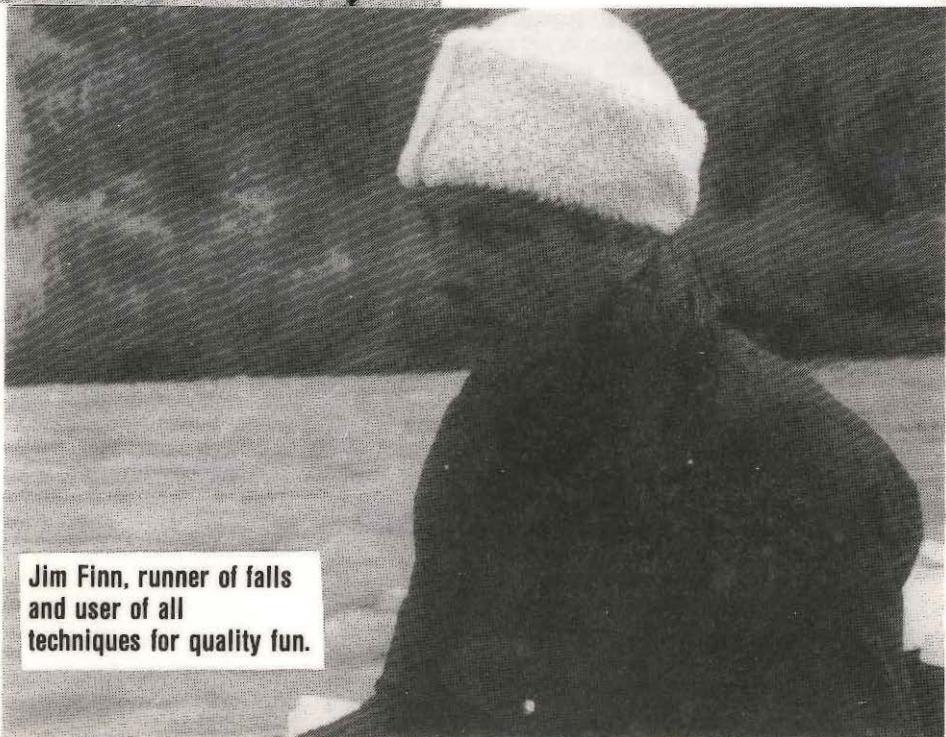
Several drownings have occurred here due to the rebar and concrete structure of the dam. Take out just above dam. At high water both channels are open. You can stay right to the shallow take out area. At low water you must run left channel right up to dam then pull right as soon as possible. It's not a bad idea to have someone on the island with your stern line to help keep from coming too close.

One of the many secrets of the Salt River.





Usually cars are parked at Rock House Store. It's a very short walk from the take out, and we've never had a vandal problem. May be a good idea to check with the owner on where to park.



Jim Finn, runner of falls and user of all techniques for quality fun.

QUARTZITE FALLS

Approaching the falls is nothing short of exciting. Especially for the first boat.

One quarter mile up river there will be a sign painted on the left side, "Danger Falls." Make sure once past this point to have some sort of plan of action. You won't have a lot of time to lollygag. At high water things happen a lot faster.

The problem is that once you decide on one side the other can't be had, and there's not much of a place to stop and think.

Low water first. On the left is an eddy, this is normally how to portage, it is just above the first fall. When running at low water there are a couple of rocks that show in front of the eddy making it hard to get in. These rocks have moved a bit over the years. At high water these are not a problem. One thing to remember, this eddy is right above, thirty feet or so, from the upper fall. One year Jim Finn ran first for the eddy on the left (LW) when we came around he wasn't there. The rocks had made it most difficult to gain access, so off he went.

On the right side a sandbar extends a little ways up above the falls. Sandbars can disappear, so beware. It's a lot easier to catch this bar than the eddy. At low water this is very true.

Typically the left side is to portage and the right is to line. However, I've seen many variations to this.

The portage leads out of the eddy up over a rock band, down the other side to some sand, up and left through a corridor, then down a short cliff to the river, which has a fair amount of water whipping by at most any level. Not much room for more than two or three boats max. Summarized, this is a royal pain in the ass.

To line you stay right. This to me feels the safest. If there isn't a sandbar, there are big rocks to slide into. So you don't have to worry about catching an eddy that might be missed. The best way to handle this lining is to have one very long (175'+) rope and a few smaller ones. Keeping anchored to one point, the boat can be dropped through the various obstacles with other short ropes.

At average water the left eddy is a little easier to catch, but you're moving quicker. At this level I wouldn't want to deal with the falls. To line on the right is still easy at average water.

At high water the eddy left isn't too bad. At one point it even starts getting bigger. The line on the right can be a little tougher because of turbulent water, but worth it in time saved.

Usually there is a big sandbar island below the falls. A good place to regroup and look at Corkscrew Chute. One year after 24000+ went down the canyon it was gone for awhile.

TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN

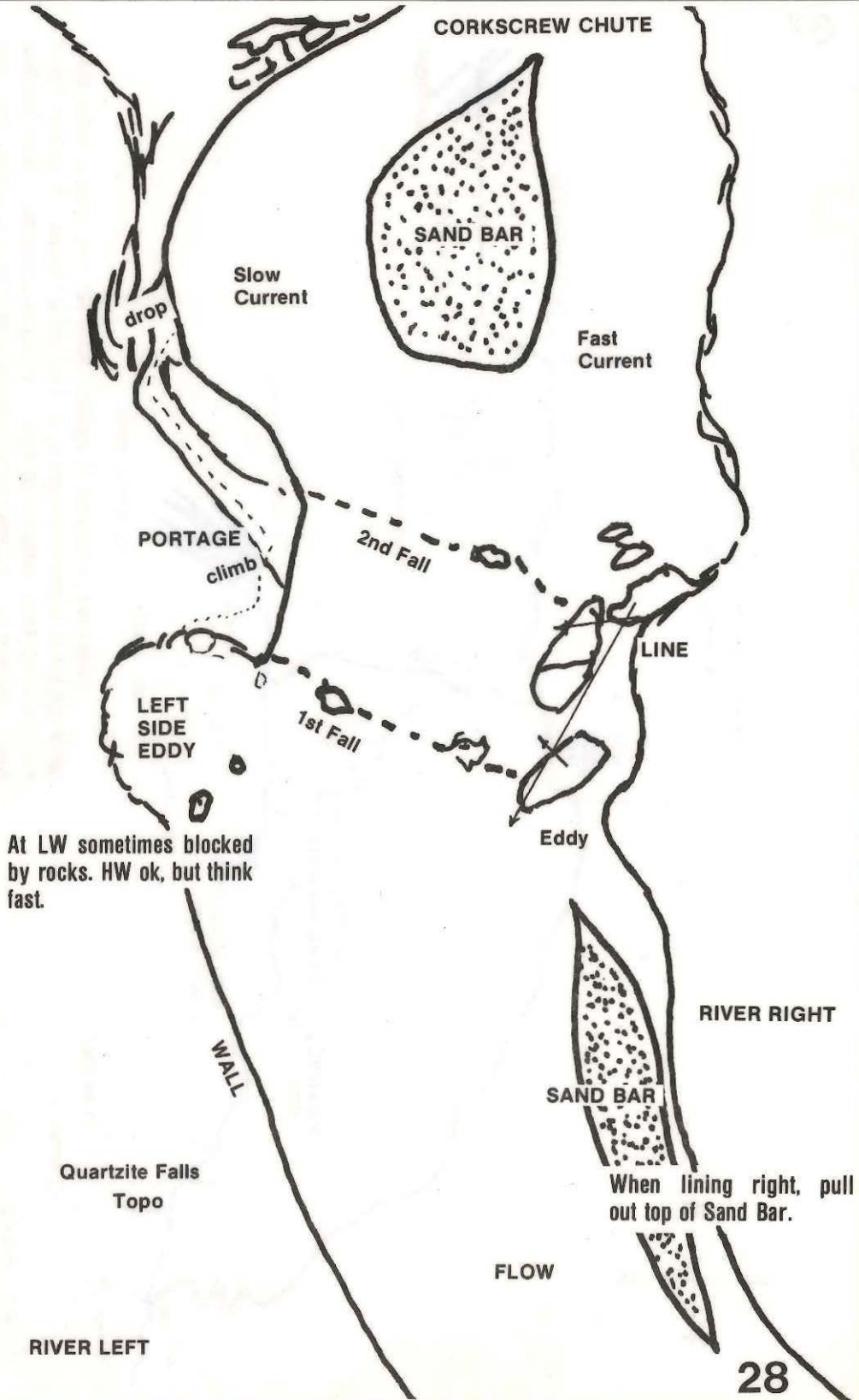
To me there is no question. But to some it's a true challenge. Ten years ago this was the site of many problems. Lots of boats got eaten and people drowned and many nearly drowned. Since the bigger boats have been running, there's been a change. The stories are fewer and farther between. All boats I have seen and heard of in the last few years have had few problems. The theory used to be 800 cfs. or less, if run on the left, it could be managed. On up to 10000 cfs. was bad news. After 10000 I'm told, "she washes out." I would favor low water is better. But I've seen it done at high water on the unpopular right side, two 16' in a row. So who's to say.

There is definitely recirculating water here and small boats or objects (people) in that hydraulic, most likely won't come out for awhile. The past has taught us.

To be on the safe side DON'T RUN THE FALLS. If you should, do it in a bigger boat (14+) and carry no passengers. I believe it's half luck and half skill. Half luck because you have absolutely no control over what action is taken against your boat. If the boat should end up in a bad attitude, it will take one hundred percent skill and lady luck sittin' on your bow.

The diagram to follow shows the eddy and line. Whenever right or left is referred to, it is assumed you're looking down river. The first drop is not the problem, the second one is!

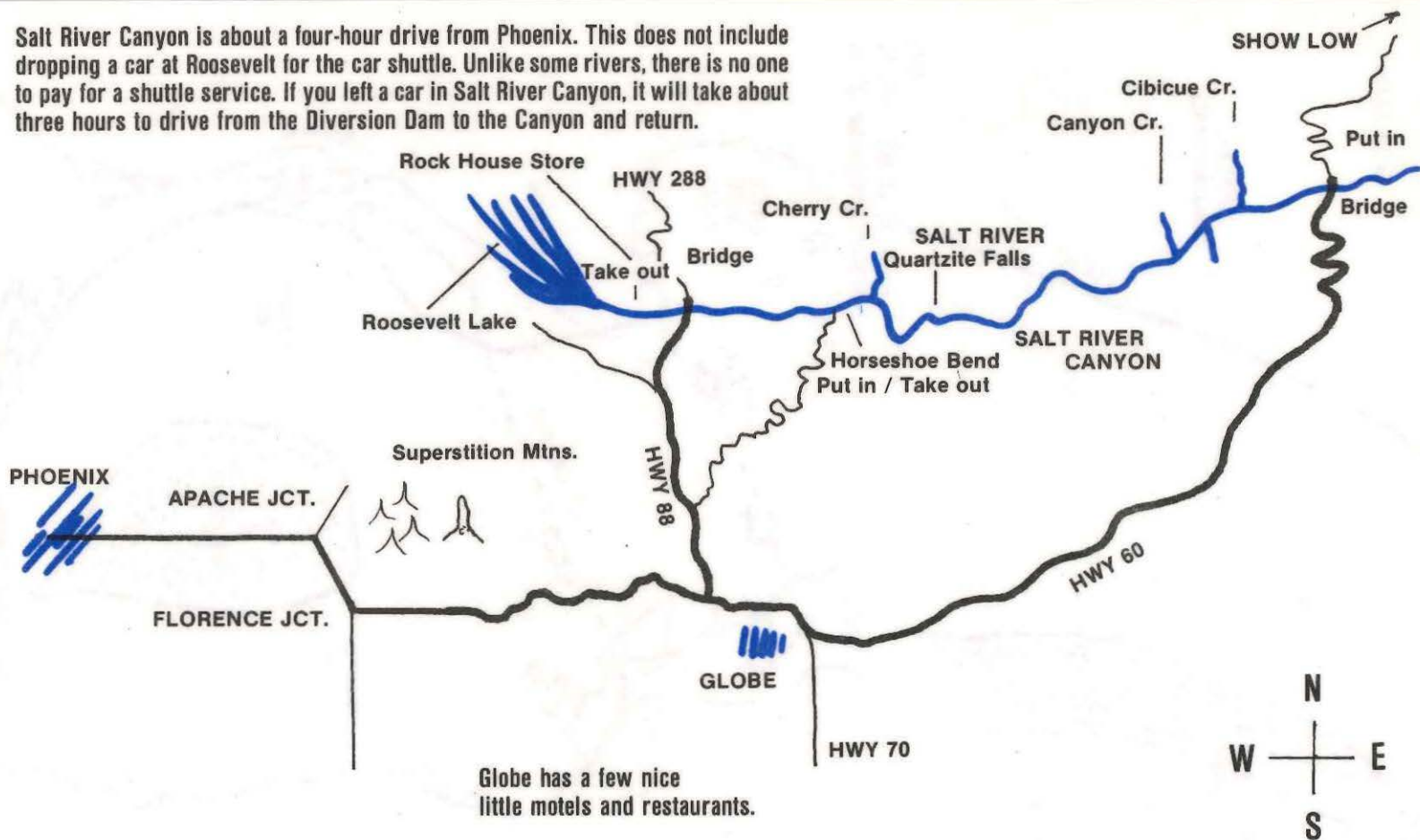
STAY IN THE BOAT.



At LW sometimes blocked by rocks. HW ok, but think fast.

When lining right, pull out top of Sand Bar.

Salt River Canyon is about a four-hour drive from Phoenix. This does not include dropping a car at Roosevelt for the car shuttle. Unlike some rivers, there is no one to pay for a shuttle service. If you left a car in Salt River Canyon, it will take about three hours to drive from the Diversion Dam to the Canyon and return.



Globe has a few nice little motels and restaurants.

Special Thanks:

Firstly, Pete Weinel for those early guides to help greenhorns like myself get started. Then there are the Mormons, Dave Brown and Mike Gardner. Dave's photography is a great asset, as well as both of their friendships. Ron Moyes and Cherokee 33302 for the flight recon. I'm not sure if it's more of a charge to fly or raft. Jim Finn for his image. And finally, for whoever put this river here.

Thank you.



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